

K-24

Geddes-Piper House  
Church Alley, Chestertown  
Post 1771, 1830's

James Moore, bricklayer, was the initial purchaser of lot No. 26 in 1730.<sup>1</sup> The lot measured ninety nine feet on High Street by two hundred seventy six feet, six inches on Queen Street. In the 1735 deed for the lot across Queen Street to John Buck, the following quotation referred to James Moore's building on lot No. 26: "lying & being in New Town or Chester Town ... opposite to a dwelling house there lately built by one James Moore ..."<sup>2</sup>

Moore probably built his house on High Street in the same manner <sup>is much</sup> ~~that~~ John Buck had his principle house constructed. Early brick foundations, which may date to Moore's ownership, are still visible beneath the existing frame structure now called the Evans Building. In his will, dated 1754, Moore bequeathed the house and lot in Chestertown to his wife for her natural life, then to his daughters, Mary, Rebecca, Margaret, Sarah, Dorcas, and Closke.<sup>3</sup> In 1771, the Moore ladies made an agreement with William Geddes, Esq. to sell the house and lot for @350 to be paid within a year and a half, but the agreement and the deed were not recorded until 1784.<sup>4</sup> Two months later, William, then living in New Castle County, Delaware, agreed to sell lot No. 26 to local merchant, James Piper and his wife Tabitha for the large sum of @800, a @450 increase in thirteen years.<sup>5</sup> This increase may represent the cost of the building now referred to as the Geddes-Piper House, or the cost of building more commercial or residential structures along High or Queen Streets. The deed, stating that the full amount had been paid,

was recorded in 1789.

On the same day, James Piper sold 62' -4" of lot No. 26, along High Street, the full depth of the lot along Queen Street, to Jeremiah Nichols, Esq. for the same amount, 800.<sup>6</sup> This left him a little over a third of the lot: 36' -8" on High Street, including that part of the lot on which the Geddes-Piper House stands. With a third of a lot and @800 to spend, it is more likely that the Geddes-Piper House was built by Piper. William Geddes' name first appeared in the Maryland Gazette, announcing his appointment as "Collector of his Majesty's Customs for the District of Chester" in March, 1767.<sup>7</sup> In May 1773, he again advertised in the Maryland Gazette that he had lost " ... off Barren Island ... a large new Pine Canoe."<sup>8</sup> He had married Mary Wilmer, daughter of Simon Wilmer (of Sassafras River) and had eight children living at the time of writing his will in 1794.<sup>9</sup> By that time, he had removed to New Castle County, Delaware.

The house was similar in plan to two houses across Queen Street: The Houston House (c. 1771) and the Nicholson House (c. 1788). When completed, the house had its kitchen in the basement, like the Nicholson House. (Fig. ) Both were two rooms deep with side stair hall, and both had the kitchen in the back room. The plans of the floors above were similar, although the third floor rooms were apparently not finished until the 1830's. (Fig. ) A biggest difference between the Geddes-Piper House and its neighbors was the use of pilasters at the corners of the building.<sup>10</sup>

Like many of Chestertown's merchants after the Revolution, James Piper began to look elsewhere for business opportunities. Soon after settling on his third part of lot No. 26, he moved to Baltimore, which was thriving by comparison to Chestertown. In July of 1793, Piper put a notice in the Maryland Gazette stating: "Notice is hereby given that the subscriber proposes to remove to Baltimore Town ... To be rented, his dwelling house, and other improvements thereunto belonging, also the Store Houses and Granary. Merchandise now on hand, will be sold at the most reduced prices."<sup>11</sup>

His house was apparently rented until his death in Baltimore in 1802, when he devised it to his two daughters, Harriet and Sophia. In 1818, Sophia and her husband William Medcalf of Baltimore sold their half interest in the property to Edward Anderson.<sup>12</sup> Edward and Matilda sold their half interest to Samuel Ringgold in 1827<sup>13</sup> and he in turn sold it, in 1828, to Robert Constable.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in a series of deeds dated 1834, 35, and 37, the property was transferred to George B. Westcott, including not only the two half interests from James Pipers heirs, but also about half of adjoining lot No. 35 bound by Court Street and Church Alley.<sup>15</sup> In 1873, Mr. Westcott purchased 105' of the adjoining parcel, previously sold to Jeremiah Nichols, bounded by Church Alley and Queen Street, thus giving him the entire frontage of 198 feet on Church alley.<sup>16</sup>

Mr. & Mrs. Westcott improved their residence soon after acquiring the property in the 1830's by constructing a 1-1/2 story brick wing off the back of the original house, containing a kitchen and family

dining room. (Fig. ) It was the Westcotts who also broke a large opening between the two original first story rooms and who finished plastering and trimming the third floor rooms. They introduced three dormers in the attic and finished that space as well, possibly to house some of the house servants. The kitchen wing had two second floor rooms which were accessible from their own corner stairs.

George B. Westcott, not to be confused with his nephew of the same name, was one of the most successful merchants and businessmen in mid-19th century Kent County. When the tax assessor recorded Mr. Westcott's holdings in Chestertown in 1841, he owned most of lot No. 26, which contained his residence and a house occupied by Charles Stanley, a cabinetmaker. It was assessed for \$1550. On adjoining lot No. 35, he had a stable and blacksmith shop. He owned a tavern on lots 44 & 45, the most valuable of his town holdings, and three houses on lot 80, occupied by E. Carty, S. Barret and S. C. Tooker. Westcott owned \$5,000 worth of private securities, but only \$300 worth of household furniture. Mr. Westcott was the first Secretary of the Mutual Fire Insurance Co. of Chestertown, founded in the 1840's. In the 1877 Atlas, Chestertown Business directory, he was listed as the President of the First National Bank. By the time of his death he owned eleven farms totaling 2717 acres, twelve lots in Chestertown in various states of improvement and four lots in Baltimore.

Upon the death of George Burgin Westcott, the residence passed to his widow, Mary Tilden Westcott, his second wife. Later it was the home of their son Charles Tilden Westcott, and Mary his wife, until 1913, when Charles died. It was during the ownership of Charles T.

Westcott that plumbing was installed in the building. He may have been responsible for adding a brick leanto off the dining room, which is known to have contained plumbing when demolished around 1960. The Kent News recorded the installation of plumbing:

“A private sewer is being run back of the residences on Queen Street, connecting with the main Street sewer in front of Mrs. Wilmer’s residence. It will be tapped by messers Chs. T. Westcott, J. H. Simperts, D. A. Bacchus, H. M. Stuart and others.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1905, Charles Westcott sold a part of lot No. 35 bordering Court Street and Church Alley to Thomas G. Wroth, on which Wroth built a large one-story brick building for his business and office.<sup>18</sup> In 1908, the High Street part of the Westcott lot was sold to Wilbur W. Hubbard on which he had built the Imperial Hotel.<sup>19</sup> Finally, after Westcott’s death, his heirs sold the house and lot on Church Alley and Queen Street to A. W. Culp.<sup>20</sup> Culp built a duplex and single residence facing Queen Street and kept the brick house, which he converted into thirteen apartments. It remained a tenement until 1958, when the property was purchased by the Historical Society of Kent County and subsequently refurbished. It has served as the headquarters of the Historical Society ever since.

1. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. 4, fol. 60.
2. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. , fol.
3. Kent Co. Wills, Lib. 3, fol. 242.
4. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. EF 6, fol. 322.

5. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. EF 6, fol. 336.
6. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. EF 7, fol. 388, 390.
7. Maryland Gazette, 17 March 1767.
8. Maryland Gazette, 1773
9. Kent Co. Wills, Lib. 8, fol. 207. (Both Will and Codicil [1795] were witnessed by Eleazer McComb, a merchant who had lived in Chestertown before and during the Revolution and was very active in the Revolutionary cause. His portrait hangs in the Corbet-Sharpe House, Odessa.).
10. Maryland Gazette,
11. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. WS 2, fol. 238.
12. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JNG 1, fol. 42.
13. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JNG 1, fol. 285.
14. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JNG 3, fol. 467, JNG 4, fol. 57, JNG 4, fol. 453.
15. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JNG 12, fol. 19.
16. Kent County News, May 18, 1889.
17. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JTD 11, fol. 402.
18. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JTD 18, fol. 151.
19. Kent Co. Land Records, Lib. JTD 29, fol. 367.

# Easement

16-2A  
Geddes-Piper House  
Chestertown  
private

c. 1730; 1780's

Originally thought to be an entirely late eighteenth century structure, the 3½-story Geddes-Piper townhouse <sup>or appears</sup> ~~is now thought~~ to have been built <sup>as early as</sup> the 1730's by its bricklayer-owner James Moore and given a Federal facelift during the 1780's under the ownership of James Piper. It is especially notable for ~~the~~ the double chimneys on ~~both~~ the southeast gable ~~the~~ end and beautifully restored Georgian entrance. It is presently the home of the Kent County Historical Society.

# Easement

## MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

### INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

#### 1 NAME

HISTORIC  
Geddes-Piper House  
AND/OR COMMON

MHT #  
1500241103  
1C-24

#### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Church Alley

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

STATE

Maryland

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

COUNTY

Kent

#### 3 CLASSIFICATION

##### CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

☐ STRUCTURE

☐ SITE

☐ OBJECT

##### OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

##### PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

##### STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

☐ UNOCCUPIED

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

##### ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☐ NO

##### PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE

☐ MUSEUM

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ PARK

☐ EDUCATIONAL

☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ RELIGIOUS

☐ GOVERNMENT

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☒ TRANSPORTATION

☐ MILITARY

☒ OTHER

#### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Kent County Historical Society

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

Church Alley

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21620

#### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Kent County Court House

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

STATE

Md.

Liber #: WHG 56

Folio #: 600

#### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

none

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE



## 7 DESCRIPTION

K-24

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☒ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Geddes-Piper House is located on the southwest side of Church Alley on a part of Town Lot 26 in Chestertown.

It is a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -story eighteenth century brick town house with a gabled roof and dormers; the building is three bays wide with the entrance in northwest bay. There is a water table. There are segmental arches of splayed brick over the basement windows and over all of the other windows on the three main stories. There are brick pilasters on all four corners of the building; there is no cap to the pilasters, which taper into the building just below the cornice. The brickwork is laid in Flemish bond.

The entrance, which is a restoration, is at the head of brick steps (5) on a wood porch; there are wood handrails. The door is 6-paneled with a 4-pane transom. It is framed by Doric pilasters, a plain frieze and a pedimented cornice with dentils below; there are also dentils within the pediment.

The windows on the facade are double hung sash 12 panes over 12 on the first story, 12 panes over 8 on the second, and eight panes over eight on the third; all have louvered shutters.

There is a box cornice with a deep soffit; the cornice has a short return along the gable ends. There are two gabled dormers with 6/6 windows.

The house is two rooms deep.

On the southeast gable end are two large chimneys projecting by the thickness of one brick from the main mass on either side of the central bay. There is one window on either side of the chimney pair on each of the three main stories and ~~a few~~ one central window in the attic. The first story windows are 9/9, the second are 12/6, and the third are 6/6; none have louvered shutters.

On the northwest gable end, there is one window on each story in the front bay: the first story window is 9/9, the second is 9/6, and the third is 6/6; none are shuttered. There are two small 1/1 windows on the second and third stories in the middle bay, which have no arches and which consequently are probably not original. There is a boarded up window in the rear bay on the first story. There is one window on the second and one on the third story, corresponding to those in the front bay, but neither has an arch. There are the two small windows in the attic.

There is a 3-bay wing to the rear, which is squared to the northwest gable end. It has a gabled roof with gabled dormers. The brickwork is laid in common bond. The wing is 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -stories. The windows are 6/6 on the northeast elevation; there are two doors and a boarded window on the southwest elevation; and there is a 6/6 window at the end with a 12/9 in the gable.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
— PREHISTORIC	— ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	— COMMUNITY PLANNING	— LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	— RELIGION
— 1400-1499	— ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	— CONSERVATION	— LAW	— SCIENCE
— 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	— ECONOMICS	— LITERATURE	— SCULPTURE
— 1600-1699	— ARCHITECTURE	— EDUCATION	— MILITARY	— SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	— ART	— ENGINEERING	— MUSIC	— THEATER
— 1800-1899	— COMMERCE	— EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	— PHILOSOPHY	— TRANSPORTATION
— 1900-	— COMMUNICATIONS	— INDUSTRY	— POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	— OTHER (SPECIFY)
		— INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1730's with late 18th c. alterations ?? BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Moore ?

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Simon Wilmer sold Town Lot 26 to James Moore, a bricklayer, in 1730 for £5. In 1735 a deed from Jonothon Page to John Buck in which 1/2 of Lot 34 across Queen Street is being deeded, (Liber 4 542) describes Lot 34 as being "opposite to a dwelling house there lately built by James Moore." James Moore being a bricklayer, and there now being an eighteenth century brick house on the lot, it is conceivable that the Geddes-Piper house in some basic form was built by Moore in the 1730's. It's style indicates some Georgian and some Federal characteristics, and we may speculate that what we have is Moore's early Georgian townhouse facelifted by James Piper sometime between 1784 and 1802.

As it stands it ~~the~~ is the only 3 1/2-story 18th century brick dwelling in Chestertown and one of its chief architectural and historical monuments. It became the home of the Kent County Historical Society in 1958.

#### Summary of Title Search

Simon Wilmer to James Moore, bricklayer Liber 4 60 (1730) £5  
(Lot 26)

James Moore wills his "houses and lott in Chestertown"--which may mean the basic Geddes-Piper structure plus 102 Queen Street, a frame house still standing--to his wife for her life and afterward to his daughters, Sarah, Dorcas, Elizabeth, etc. Wills Liber 3 242 (1754)

Sarah, Dorcas, Elizabeth Moore, etc. to William Geddes E F 6 322 (1784) £350  
(Moore daughters owed Geddes £700; they sell him property for £350 half of which he immediately turns over--the half with the Geddes-Piper house on it--for £800.

William Geddes to James Piper EF 7 388 (1784) £800.

James Piper wills property to Harriet Piper Medcalf and Sophia Piper (1802)  
William Medcalf and Harriet Piper Medcalf to Edward Anderson WS 2 238 (1818) \$750  
Edward Anderson to Samuel Ringgold JNG 1 42 (1827) \$1000. (includes part of Lot 35)  
Samuel Ringgold to Robert Constable JNG 1 285 (1828) \$975 (now all of 35)  
Robert Constable to George B. Wescott JNG 4 453 (1837) \$700  
Wescott purchaes a piece of the other half of Lot 26, between the G-P house and Queen Street and up to 102 Queen but short of it in 1873 for \$350. JKH 12 19.  
John B. Wescott et al. heirs of C.T. Wescott, to Alwyn Culp JTD 29 367 (1914) \$1500.  
etc.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

K-24

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert Neill Historic Site Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust / Town of Chestertown

DATE

May, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

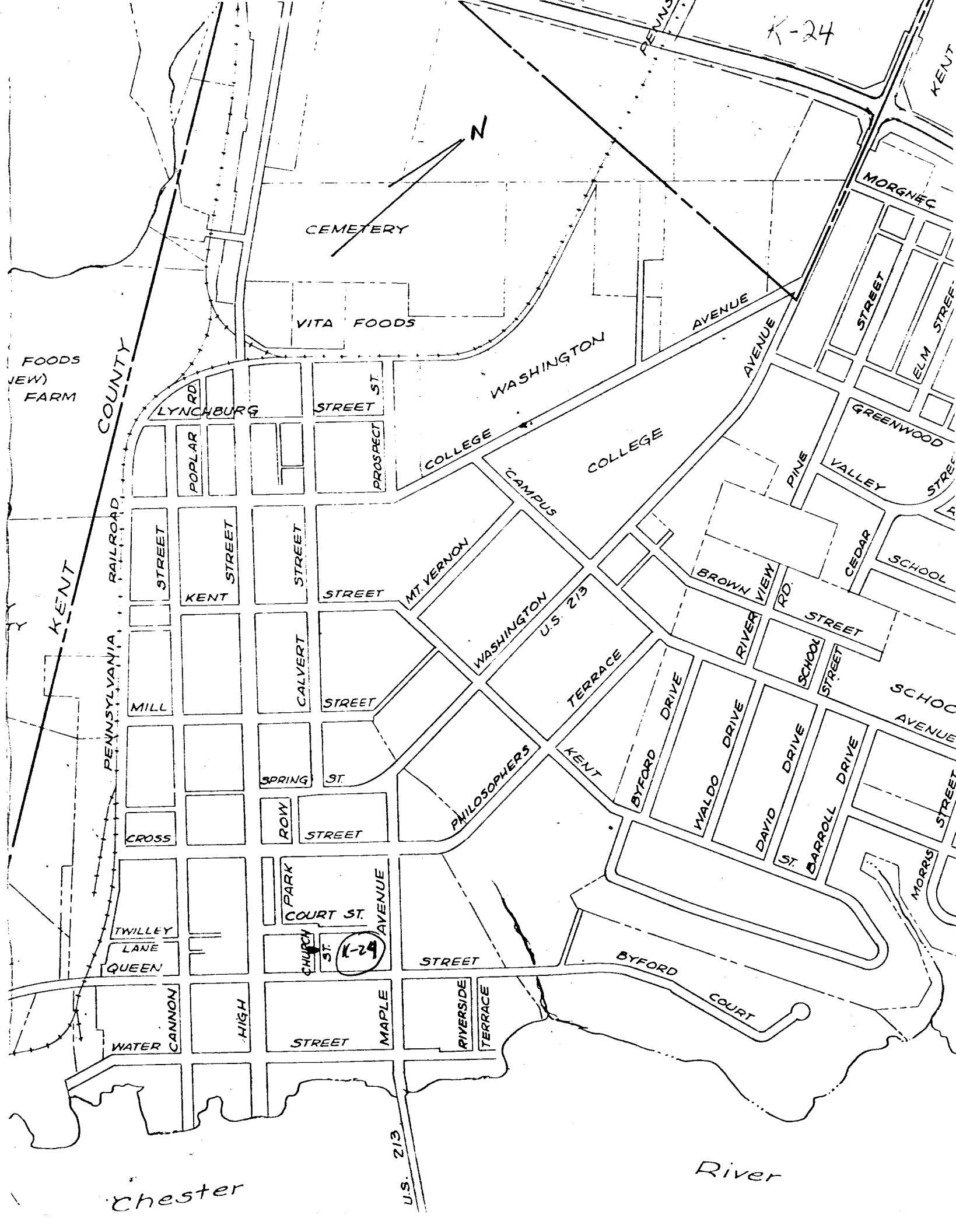
CITY OR TOWN

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438





Leddes-Piper House, Church Alley, Chestertown K-29  
spring 1976 Robert Neill K Neill



K-24 Liddes Pipe House, Church Alley, Chesterton  
spring 1976 Robert Neill NE view

B-6-1





K-24

Geddes-Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file @ MHT

005



K-24

Geddes-Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file @ MHT

*JE*



K-24

Geddes - Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file WMHT

RLS



K-24

Geddes-Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file @ MHT

PLS





K-24

Geddes - Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file @ MHT



K-24

Geddes - Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file @ MHT

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K-24

Geddes - Piper House

Jack L. Finglass

10/1976

Negative on file @ MHT

505